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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: LATEST FLAP DEFUSED

Classified By: ECOPOL Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Following a series of continuing verbal attacks on the United States over the past few weeks, including President Morales's UNGA speech asking that the UN be taken out of the United States, the Ambassador when asked what he made of a campaign to move the U.N., said that after all these attacks it would not surprise him if Bolivia next asked that we move Disney World (full text provided para 5 below). This prompted a fierce retort from Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca. FM Choquehuanca said publicly on October 4 that: "Ambassador Goldberg's statements are not dignified. It is an offense to the entire country, not just to the entire country, it is an offense to the entire indigenous campesino movement of the continent. It is a racist attitude, the declarations of the ambassador. We want him to retract his statement. Until he does, he will not be a valid interlocutor between our countries."

¶2. (C) Choquehuanca's deputy, Hugo Fernandez, called the Ambassador to voice displeasure but mainly urged the Ambassador to communicate through diplomatic channels. He also apologized for the Foreign Minister's verbal attacks. The Ambassador made clear that there was no/no intention to offend anyone but that the Morales administration's now constant stream of anti-U.S. rhetoric and actions was increasingly making it difficult to promote positive ties. The Ambassador said he would welcome increased communication through diplomatic channels and hoped that the government would likewise show restraint when speaking publicly. The Deputy FM said he could not promise such restraint.

¶3. (C) On October 5, at a meeting requested by the Ambassador to discuss the imposition of visas on Amcits (an appointment made after the Foreign Minister declared the Ambassador "invalido"), the MFA provided a diplomatic note asking the Ambassador to "retract" his statement publicly and urging that the Ambassador use diplomatic channels when addressing his government interlocutors. The Ambassador again registered our concerns over the escalating anti-American rhetoric and actions, stressed that we remain interested in trying to foster a productive working relationship and noted that he would publicly state that he did not intend to offend anyone. Then, upon exiting the MFA the Ambassador addressed the media to convey this message,

adding that our relationship needed to be conducted through mutual respect.

¶4. (C) Comment. Despite our best efforts to try to develop a positive relationship with Evo and his government, he seems intent on using the United States as his punching bag to score political points domestically. Even if he realizes that imposing visas, establishing ties with Iran, attacking USAID and going after us at the UN strains the relationship, he seems intent on continuing down this path. This was no doubt pushed by Morales advisers from Caracas and Havana. End Comment.

Ambassador's public comments on October 3

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¶5. (U) Question from the La Razon newspaper: Ambassador, have you received any formal complaint regarding the alleged mistreatment that President Morales received upon arrival at the UN?

Answer: "No. We have not received any complaints through diplomatic channels. I am sorry and we are sorry that the group of Bolivians who traveled with the government felt that they were mistreated, because we take very seriously our obligation as hosts of the UN. It has been an honor to be the host of the UN for 60 years and we are going to continue treating our guests at the UN very, very well. Really, if there were a problem, I don't know anything about it, because we haven't received anything diplomatically."

Question from UNITEL (TV): Mr. Ambassador, two questions, please. President Morales has suggested that the headquarters of the UN should be changed(.

Answer: Given the attacks of the last few weeks, it wouldn't surprise me if they also wanted to change Disney's headquarters. We are good hosts of the UN. We take our obligations as host very seriously. I think that the entire world loves New York and wants the UN headquarters to stay there. But, really, this is something that, well, I see more in the newspaper than in any other place.

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